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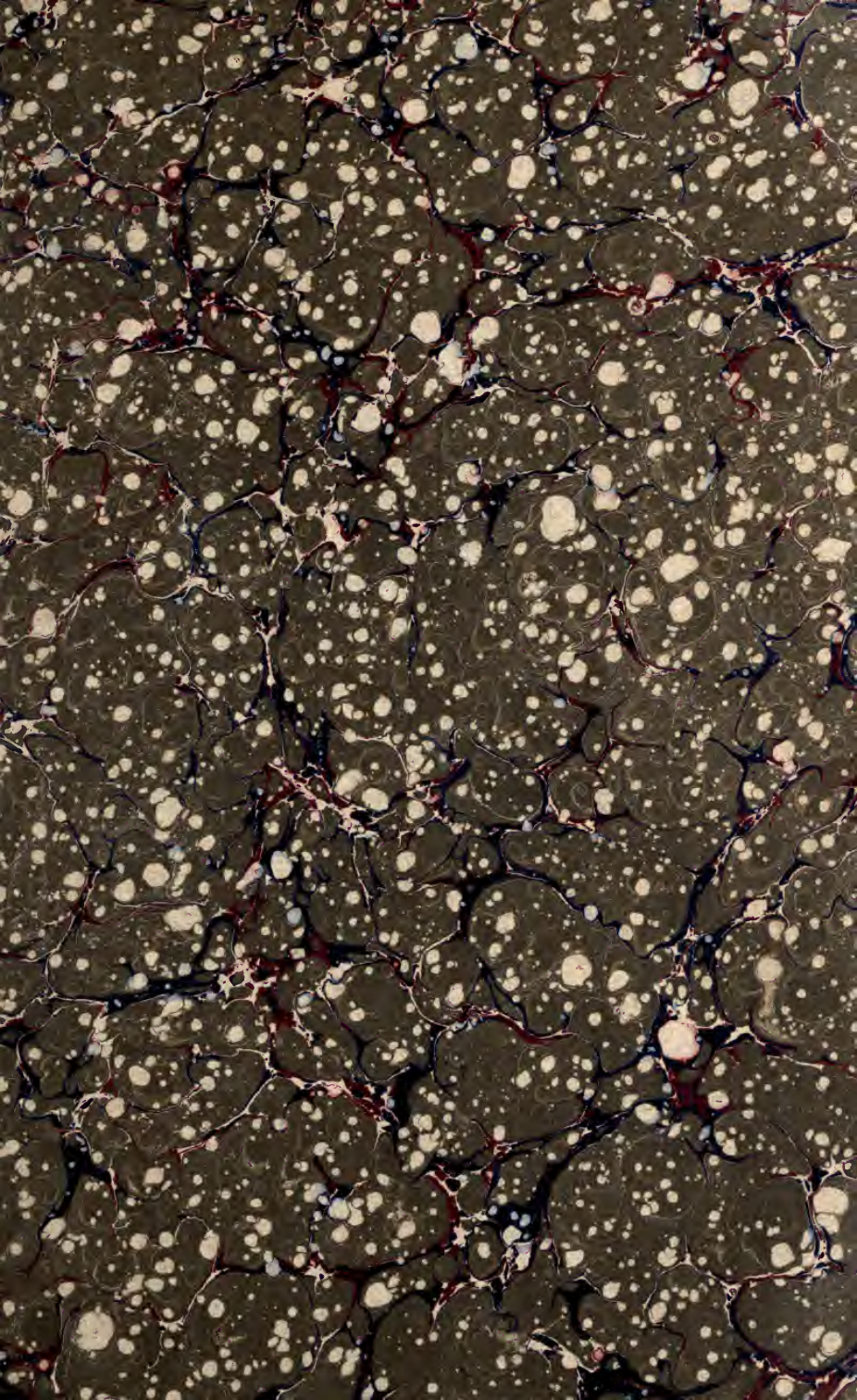
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# WASHINGTON

AND THE

# MOTHER COUNTRY

An Address

BY THE

RIGHT HON. SIR EDMUND MONSON, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE



'Washington, the greatest man of our own or of any age'

LORD BROUGHAM, *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1838

Paris

BRENTANO'S

37 AVENUE DE L'OPÉRA



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HORACE HART, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

## Prefatory Note

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THE American University Dinner Club at Paris—an association of gentlemen who have formerly been students at some University, College, or Professional School—gave a patriotic banquet at the Hôtel Continental, on February 22, 1897, in celebration of Washington's Birthday.

*The occasion of the Address.*

Sir Edmund Monson, the newly-appointed British Ambassador to France—who had not as yet made a public speech in Paris—accepted the invitation of the Club to preside at this re-union, and to open the intellectual festivities with a toast to 'Washington and the Mother Country.'

The Ambassador's address was noticeable, not only for its scholarly qualities, but for two additional reasons: first, for His Excellency's ample recognition, as a British Statesman, of the justice of the American Cause in 1776; and second, for his hearty advocacy of the now pending Treaty of Arbitration between the two great nations of the English-speaking world.

*Ordered to  
be printed.*

Sir Edmund Monson's remarks on these two points elicited a spontaneous vote from the Club that his timely and useful address should at once be printed in a pamphlet for wide distribution <sup>1</sup>.

It is in pursuance of this vote that His Excellency's speech is here published—not merely as a graceful incident of a festal evening—but as a significant utterance which, from its high official source, may prove (it is to be hoped) a helpful influence toward a permanent and irreversible policy of peace and amity between Great Britain and the United States.

By order of the Club,

THEODORE STANTON,  
HONORARY SECRETARY.

PARIS, *March*, 1897.

<sup>1</sup> The members of the American University Dinner Club did not stand alone in their high appreciation of Sir Edmund's effort. The London *Times* of February 23, 1897, published it in full, and a French version appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of March 15, 1897.

## Speech by Sir Edmund Monson

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It is a great privilege and a great honour which you have conferred upon me, in inviting me to take the chair upon such an occasion as this. The honour would have been great had you simply invited me as one of your guests. But in asking me to preside as your chairman, you have offered me much more than a compliment. You have conferred upon me a privilege of which my only apprehension is that I am not competent to make adequate use of it.

You will allow me, however, before proceeding to speak to the sentiment which you have suggested as the text of appropriate treatment from the chair, to say a few words personal to myself. In placing me in the position I occupy, I cannot err in believing that you have wished to make a very patent demonstration of your desire that between Americans and English, whose early education and whose subsequent tastes have led them to the common ground of study and of

*The Chair-  
manship  
of the  
Banquet.*

culture, it should be understood that the bond of sympathy and of association is one of no ordinary strength ; and that we students of history recognize in a peculiar manner the beneficial teachings of the past, and appreciate in an exceptional degree the advantages which should, and which do accrue to both nations from the events which once seemed to constitute the parting of the ways, but which we can now regard as the source of much that is most valuable in the civilization of the world, as well as most conducive to the after progress of the two nations.

*The value  
of historical  
study.*

The study of history has, from my University days, had for me unceasing attraction<sup>1</sup>; and, although a diplomatist's leisure is not perhaps so abundant as is generally imagined, his occupations, his travels, and even his professional duties encourage and justify him in continuing that study during the whole of his career. Much of what I have myself learned of the duties to which I have referred has been gained by a residence in your own country, where the elements of such knowledge as had been instilled into my mind by the study at Oxford of your famous writer on international law, Henry Wheaton, were supplemented by the practical experience of such knotty questions and difficulties in the applica-

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edmund Monson was First Class in Law and Modern History Schools in the University of Oxford, 1855.

tion of that law, as inevitably arose from the incidents of the troublous times in which part of my sojourn in the United States happened to be cast.

1858-  
1863.

I pass, however, to the immediate subject which I have been asked to treat, and am at once confronted with the reflection that it is hard indeed for any speaker on a theme which has engaged the eloquence of thousands of tongues, the skill of thousands of pens, to attract your attention by anything novel or original.

But let me endeavour to draw that attention to a consideration of what was in Washington's early years his own position, what were his sentiments towards the Mother Country. I need not remind you that his affectionate historians have busied themselves in tracing his descent from a remote past, and from a famous family of the feudal ages. They have every right to think as Horace wrote :

*Washington's  
ancestry.*

‘Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis;’

*Horace,  
Odes, IV, 4.*

but Washington himself seems to have cared but little for the prestige of long lineage, or the pomp of illustrious ancestry; for we have it under his own hand, at the close of his life, that ‘the descent of his family was a subject to which he had paid but very little attention.’ And of him it may well be said :

*Tennyson's  
'Lady  
Clara Vere  
de Vere.'*

'Howe'er it be, it seems to me  
'Tis only noble to be good;  
Kind hearts are more than coronets,  
And simple faith than Norman blood.'

(Applause.)

*Lawrence  
Washington.*

No, I cannot fancy Washington troubling himself even in his boyhood upon a point so unprofitable; but I can well understand his interest in all that he must have heard of the Mother Country during the years of his intimate and affectionate association with his elder brother Lawrence, who, as we know, had been sent by his father, at the age of fifteen, to complete his education in England; and who returned, after six or seven years, to America a well-educated and accomplished young man. The interest shown by Lawrence Washington in his half-brother was more than fraternal, and that interest was returned in kind. From his elder brother George Washington must have heard much of that England which he was never to see himself, of that England, from political connexion with which he could, as a boy, but little have dreamed that he was destined to act as the principal instrument of severance.

*Washington's love of  
England.*

It cannot, however, be doubted that, not only in his earlier years, but even to the very eve of those events, in the shaping of which he was called to take so prominent a part, Washington, like most of his contemporaries, kept up the tradi-

tional sentiment towards the Mother Country, which regularly found its interpretation in the word 'Home.' He cherished, as he himself writes, 'The longing desire, which for many years he had had, of visiting the great metropolis of England.' To him, as to most of those who were afterwards compelled to turn their arms against her, England was in reality as well as in name the 'Mother Country.' But this sentiment had no effect upon Washington's sense of justice when the gathering clouds darkened the prospect of a continuance of good relations between England and her colonies. His convictions were always steadfast and decided on the colonial side. It is true that he was less forward than others in declaring or declaiming against the Mother Country; but as a soldier who had already had experience of the horrors of war, he would clearly be justified in feeling some reluctance in joining in the less reflecting ardour of the civilians, and in precipitating a step which would inflict on his country the havoc of fratricidal strife. When, however, during the long continuance of the struggle, the American arms were not always crowned with success, and when temporary defeat roused apprehension of ultimate subjugation, Washington's spirit never quailed; he never despaired of his country, although he had made up his mind to quit the colonies for ever rather

*His Pa-  
triotism.*



than acquiesce in the reimposition of the English yoke. It has been well said of him that the lofty motto, which the Spaniards of old were wont to engrave on their Toledo blades, might with truth and aptness have adorned his sword :

‘ Never draw me without reason ; never sheath me without honour <sup>1</sup>.’

(Hear ! hear !)

*The breach  
between  
the two  
countries.*

Looking back upon the history of a hundred years, we of the Mother Country can have but little reason to doubt that the mysterious ways in which the destinies of man are directed have led, in the case of the great breach between England and her American colonies, to the most beneficent results. Time was—not even out of my own recollection—when this question was still keenly debated on our side of the Atlantic, as keenly as in the older days, when the justification of the colonists in rising to throw off the yoke was equally held to be doubtful.

For myself, I can have no hesitation in expressing my conviction on both points, regarding them from an Englishman’s point of view. And while I regret on principle the mistake, the narrow-mindedness of the Government of King George, I cannot but rejoice that their action precipitated before the end of the last century a solution of

<sup>1</sup> ‘ No me saques sin razon,  
No me embaines sin honor.’

the question which must have cropped up in a far more complicated form at a later date. (Loud applause.)

I need not speak of what is better understood by all Americans than by Englishmen: of the gigantic strides by which the United States have grown to be a first-rate power; of the complete transformation within a century of a vast wilderness into a land of plentiful industry; of the development of the inventive faculties of man to an extent which must be called marvellous. But I cannot conceal from myself how immense has been the influence, how potent the example of your progress and your institutions upon the Mother Country. I cannot believe that such results would have been secured to either of us had the political tie remained unsevered; and in the interests of my own country, as well as in your own, I can congratulate the descendants of the so-called rebels on the benefits which their patriotic policy has secured to us. (Applause.)

It is unnecessary for me to remind you that even at the outset of the struggle, and for some time after its commencement, there were not wanting in the Mother Country voices, and those the most eloquent, which not only denounced the policy of the king's Government, but proclaimed with conviction the impossibility of the task proposed. You must all of you remember the

*England's  
gain by  
American  
inde-  
pendence.*

*The Earl of  
Chatham's  
speech.*

Nov. 18,  
1777.

brilliant oration, in which the great Chatham pointed out to his colleagues in the House of Lords the absolute futility of the enterprise.

‘My Lords,’ said he, ‘you cannot conquer America; you may swell every expense and every effort still more extravagantly, pile and accumulate every assistance you can buy or borrow, traffic and barter with every little pitiful German prince, who sells and sends his subjects to the shambles of a foreign power; but your efforts are for ever vain and impotent, doubly so from this mercenary aid on which you rely, for it irritates to an incurable resentment the minds of your enemies. If I were an American as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country, I would never lay down my arms—never—never—never.’

(Loud applause.)

*Parallel  
between  
Chatham  
and Wash-  
ington.*

This was the voice, these were the sentiments, of the most enlightened of the scions of the Mother Country. They failed in arresting the policy against which they were directed, and in my judgement they happily failed; but, none the less, they remain on record as the generous expression of a sympathy which the adherents of the court might qualify as treasonable, but which was in harmony with the traditions of England, and with the principles by which she has achieved her constitutional liberties. If Washington was the personification of sincere and modest patriotism, surely Chatham embodies in his mighty soul the inspirations of a patriotism none the less sincere nor less genuine, because it found an inadequate response on the part of those who

encouraged a kind-hearted monarch in a course which exposed him to the charge of tyranny.

Pre-eminent on the east and west of the Atlantic stand up the figures of those two patriots ; the one, the type of the calm reflecting soldier, penetrated with the justice of his cause, and prepared to make every sacrifice on its behalf; the other, the sagacious statesman, ripe in years, experience, and foresight, brimful of sympathy with the cause of liberty, and overflowing with a true appreciation of the spirit which had been aroused by England's disregard of her best traditions. (Hear! hear!)

I need not linger upon the theme of Washington's military achievements. I pass to the later years of his life, when, twice elected to the presidential chair, he shared in no slight degree the heavy responsibility of guiding the policy of a state rejoicing in its newly gained independence. The Mother Country, having acquiesced in that independence, still sulkily withheld for eight years the customary recognition of a sovereign state afforded by the appointment of a diplomatic representative. Causes for irritation remained, which might have led to a renewal of hostilities, and that such did not ensue was greatly due to the firmness and dexterity of the administration of the country under Washington's supervision. The Mother Country was indeed deeply indebted to the President's sagacious grasp of power and the

*Washington's Presidency.*

*George Hammond, 1791.*

*Thomas  
Pinckney.*

*Jay's  
Treaty.*

*Letter to  
Randolph,  
Secretary  
of State,  
July 31,  
1795.*

*Wash-  
ington's  
nobility of  
character.*

*Horace,  
Odes, III,  
30.*

force of his character, and the recognition it received in England cannot be better illustrated than by the fact recorded that, two years before Washington's final retirement from office, the American Minister in London wrote to him in connexion with the treaty of November 19, 1794, that the confidence reposed in England in the President's personal character was visible and useful throughout the negotiation.

It was in reference to the clamour provoked in the United States by this treaty that Washington, in defending it, said :

‘ There is but one straight course, and that is to seek truth and pursue it steadily.’

The high integrity of Washington was indeed so thoroughly impressed upon all who came in contact with him, that at the close of his presidential career, when he took leave of his immediate friends at a farewell dinner, Mrs. Liston, the wife of the British Minister, burst into tears. Yes—first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen—Washington has also his niche of honour in the heart of the Mother Country, and we also claim the right to be proud of his memory. For of a truth :

‘ Exegit monumentum aere perennius,  
Regalique situ Pyramidum altius ;  
Quod non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens  
Possit diruere, aut innumerabilis  
Annorum series, et fuga temporum.’

I wish that it had been in my power to congratulate you, as I had hoped to be able to do, upon the acceptance by your Legislature of the project which the patient and laborious representatives of our two countries have recently devised for the adjustment of minor differences between us. (Great applause.) I say 'minor' advisedly, for I cannot think that we shall allow ourselves to fall into dispute upon matters concerning our mutual honour and reputation. We have neither of us, I firmly believe, any idea or design of infringing upon our respective and assured rights; and the divergences and discussions between us can only arise from such misunderstandings as can easily be solved by a court of arbitration. I cannot doubt that the good sense of the two nations will finally triumph over all prejudice against such a method of arrangement. I have reason to think so, having myself acted as arbitrator between the Government of the United States and that of Denmark, in a case in which I decided against your country, and found that my decision was accepted without cavil<sup>1</sup>. (Applause.)

From my heart I desire the conclusion of such

*Inter-  
national  
Arbi-  
tration.*

*Case of  
the 'Ben  
Franklin'  
and  
'Catherine  
Augusta,'  
or 'Butter-  
field  
Claim,'  
decided  
Jan. 22,  
1890.*

<sup>1</sup> After several ineffectual attempts at negotiating an arrangement, which were prolonged for more than thirty years, a Convention was concluded between the two countries, December 6, 1888.

*The  
Proposed  
Arbitration  
Tribunal.*

an agreement as will not only draw still nearer the tie which unites us, but which will set a laudable example to the whole of the civilized world. What could be a more brilliant illustration of the reality of the sentiment which couples the land of Washington with the Mother Country, than the sight of the select judges of your Supreme Court, associated with members of our own Supreme Court of Judicature, in the enunciation and indication of principles of international right? What more fitting tribute to the memory of the great man, whose words I will once more quote?—

‘There is but one straight course, and that is to seek truth and pursue it steadily.’

I drink to that memory :

‘ESTO PERPETUA.’

(Cheers and long continued applause.)







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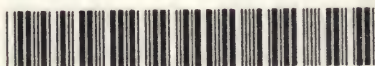
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